

Covering letter guidelines and examples

A covering letter should always be sent with a CV. The purpose of a covering letter is to convince an employer to invite you to interview. It should highlight your key selling points from your CV. A CV details your achievements and skills; your letter should capture your personality and enthusiasm for a particular job. It will often be the first document the recruiter sees, before even looking at your CV.

Covering letters should usually be no more than one side of A4. Take as much advice as you can and decide what layout and content suits you best. This leaflet covers what you should include in a covering letter, gives you some examples and a basic template for you to adapt for your own letters.

Typical content of a covering letter

Address the letter to a named individual. Otherwise it can look like your CV and covering letter is being sent to lots of companies with little evidence of commitment to the organisation. If you don't find a name in the 'how to apply' information, do some research to find the appropriate person to whom you should address your application. Call or email the organisation and ask for details. Use 'Dear Sir/Madam' as a last resort.

Opening paragraph

The opening paragraph should state which job you are applying for, where advertised, and demonstrate your enthusiasm for doing it. Example:

Dear Mr Jones

IT Development Trainee (Reference ITGP 2)

Your advertisement for the above vacancy, which was on the University of Liverpool Careers & Employability Service website, is exactly the opportunity I am seeking. As a recent IT graduate and as evidenced by my enclosed CV, I feel that I have the necessary skills and commitment to make a significant contribution to this role.

Middle paragraphs

Tailor your letter for maximum impact. Your letter should answer the question "Why should I recruit this person?" Tell the recruiter why you are the right person for the job. Bring together all the relevant information from your CV to highlight your key "selling points". Tell the recruiter what attracts you to their organisation. Each paragraph you write should have a particular goal.

Highlight your most relevant experience, skills or attributes by giving evidence. Limit your comments within the letter to 3 or 4 of the most critical job requirements. Consider using bullet points for your evidence. Use the person specification and/or job description. Example:

You will see from my enclosed CV that your requirements match my skills and experience. In particular I have:

- Gained an in depth knowledge of structured methods and data modelling and I have a good understanding of Oracle and SQL Server as well as operating systems, networks and programming.
- Demonstrated my excellent communication skills, having been awarded a first class mark for my second year tutorial presentation at university.
- Proved my team skills in numerous situations, for example, as a member of the production line team at Pork Farms I suggested a rota system, which enabled members to change around positions to utilise their particular strengths. This enabled us to meet the Christmas target two days ahead of schedule.

Show that you have researched the company, the job/career and its requirements. Our leaflet [How to research a recruiter](#) will give you tips on how to do this. Concentrate on what you can do for them, rather than on what they can do for you. All recruiters want employees who can add something to their organisation; this is your chance to tell them what that is.

Having spoken to your representatives at the Liverpool Graduate Careers Fair I was impressed by the way that early responsibility is given to new graduates and that support is given to undertake further training. ABC Retail Group offers a dynamic culture where I will be able to exploit the exciting opportunities for career development that are offered to me and where my contribution will be valued. With your current strategy of diversifying the product range and expansion into the European market I am keen to be part of the new challenges facing your organisation.

Closing paragraph

Your closing paragraph should clarify what will happen next. If the job does not have a closing date or if it is a speculative application, say that you will follow up your letter with a telephone call to try and arrange a mutually convenient meeting. Make sure you call if you say this.

(letter in response to vacancy)

Thank you for considering my application and I hope to hear from you in the near future. I am available for interview at any time and look forward to the opportunity to talk with you further about my application.

(speculative application/vacancy with no closing date)

I will contact you in two weeks from the date of this letter in order to discuss my request and to arrange a convenient time to discuss this further.

End your letter 'Yours sincerely' if sent to a named person or 'Yours faithfully' if no name has been given.

Covering letter template

<Your address>
<Date>

<Name of HR Manager/Recruitment Partner>
<Address of organisation>
<Postcode of organisation>

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms <add surname>

First paragraph. The introduction. Begin by saying 'I am writing to you to apply for vacancy x, advertised on website y' **or** if you are unsure whether the employer has any actual vacancies, say 'I am writing to you to enquire as to whether you have any current vacancies in role x'. Then say who you are e.g. you are currently at the University of Liverpool... and give details of your degree subject (and expected class, plus when you expect to graduate, if you are applying for a graduate role).

Second paragraph. Why Them. Give about 3 reasons why you are applying to that organisation (use the leaflet How to research a recruiter to help with this. Do not make vague generalisations about the organisation's 'excellent reputation' or its 'first class training programme'. Try to show that you have researched the firm and you know what they do.

Third paragraph. Why You. Give 3 reasons why the organisation should consider you. What you got to offer the business? In other words, talk about any relevant experience you have and/or the key skills you can contribute. Say that you enclose/attach your CV which gives further evidence of your relevant academic qualifications, skills and experience.

Final paragraph. Sign off, saying when you will be available for interview and that you look forward to hearing from them.

Yours sincerely
<your signature>
<print your name underneath>

Common covering letter mistakes and how to avoid them

- Too short. Your letter is as important as your CV in telling the recruiter about your key skills and achievements relevant to the job.
- Too much text. Make it easy to read, break it into paragraphs or bullet points.
- Too much emphasis on what you hope to gain from the job rather than what you can offer.
- Not mentioning the recruiter and why you want to work for them.
- Using weak or passive language. Avoid such phrases as "I feel" and "I believe." Try to use phrases such as "I am confident that...", "I am convinced I can...", or "I am positive that my..."
- Starting every paragraph with "I". Use a mixture of starting points e.g. "Having studied x...", "Throughout my work experience..."
- Being too informal. Promote yourself as a professional who can add value to the organisation.
- Repeating word-for-word what is in your CV. Write down the highlights not all the facts.
- Typos, spelling mistakes and poor grammar. Make sure your spell checker uses UK English.
- Sending it to the wrong person/company. Double check the names of the person you are writing to and the name of the organisation.

If you applying electronically, do you add your covering letter as an attachment, add it in the same document as your CV or paste your letter it into the body of the email? Check if the job advert asks for something specific. If not, then there is no real right or wrong way. Whatever you decide, save your letter with a sensible filename e.g. Chris_Smith_Covering_Letter.doc. Use an email subject line that makes sense to the recruiter and looks professional e.g. Ref: SC123 Graduate Supply Chain Trainee.

Additional information

If you have issues that don't 'fit' into a CV, use your covering letter to give the recruiter this information.

- If you don't have the required degree classification or number of 'A' level points specified for the job and you believe you have a genuine reason why you might have underperformed in terms of the those requirements, use the covering letter to state why you should be given consideration for the job. Give the reasons for the underperformance and strongly highlight those areas where you do meet or possibly exceed the job criteria. Always present issues in a positive way where you can. Try to cover any fears that the recruiter might have. A careers adviser can discuss such issues with you.
- If you have a disability you may be wondering whether or how to put this across to the recruiter. There are no "rules" about this. Guidance on how and when to approach these issues is available [online](#). A careers adviser can discuss such issues with you.
- If you are an international student your covering letter would be a good place to state your eligibility to work in the UK, if appropriate. Read our [CVs & covering letters for international students](#) leaflet for more information.

How we can help

Use our quick query appointment service to get your cover letter reviewed by a careers adviser. Come as many times as you need to. Browse the reference books in our Careers Resource Centre. For a full list of the latest editions search the [university library catalogue](#).

Careers & Employability Service

Tel: 0151 794 4647 |Email: careers@liv.ac.uk |www.liv.ac.uk/careers|Twitter/Facebook @livunicareers

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This document is available in alternative formats on request. Please ask us for details.

You are advised to check material facts. We try to ensure that information given is up-to-date but we are aware that information is subject to change. Any links are used to provide further information and are not intended to signify that we endorse such websites and/or their content.

Example covering letter: 1

1 High Street
Liverpool
L69 1ZZ

<insert date>

Mr Richard Branson
XYZ Aerospace
Cardiff
CF21 2TY

Include any information in your letter that you haven't been able to include in your CV BUT – your CV must be a 'stand-alone' document

Dear Mr Branson

Graduate Trainee: Job reference number A380

I am writing in response to your advertisement in today's 'Flight News' for a graduate trainee to join your company in September 2016.

I am currently studying for a BEng Aerospace Engineering at the University of Liverpool. I expect to graduate next summer with a high 2:1 degree. Having enjoyed my degree enormously, I feel that the completion of my degree will be my most significant achievement to date.

I am very interested in joining your company as a graduate trainee. I admire your company's stance on sustainability and having looked at the company website, I would find it tremendously exciting to be involved in the projects you have planned in Europe and USA.

I am particularly keen to start my career as an engineer. In project work that I've been involved with at university, I feel that I have particular strengths in project management and being able to motivate fellow team members to work to their strengths. Along with my technical and engineering knowledge I think that this would make me a strong candidate for the trainee position. I have taken several elective modules that would enable me to make an early and positive contribution to your company; in addition my final year project on 'Helicopter handling qualities....' has enabled me to gain an in-depth knowledge of the aerospace sector.

As part of my involvement with the Royal Aeronautical Society, I have been able to meet engineering professionals in the aerospace industry, which has helped to confirm my own enthusiasm for this opportunity with your company.

I am available for interview at any time and would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application with you.

Yours sincerely

Orville Wright

Orville Wright

Use 'faithfully' if you have addressed to 'Dear Sir/Madam'

1st paragraph – explain why you're sending your CV and where you saw the vacancy

2nd paragraph outline your current situation

3rd paragraph – why are you interested in this job/company?

Why are you interested in this job – how does your experience match it in this job/company?

Finish on a friendly

Example covering letter: 2

<insert your address and postcode>

Ms J Murphy
Eden Bioscience Plc
Speke Science Park
Liverpool
L77 7TG

<insert date>

Dear Ms Murphy

Vacancy: Research Assistant Ref. 262

I am a final year student currently studying BSc (Hons) Biochemistry at the University of Liverpool. Please find attached my CV to support my application for the post of Research Assistant.

I believe I have the necessary technical skills you require, in particular extensive use of HPLC and mass spectrometry. I have also performed at a consistently high level throughout my degree with an overall 65% average. In addition, I gained a first in my immunology module which drives my interest in your development of vaccines. I have also demonstrated the ability to learn new scientific techniques quickly and effectively throughout my degree.

I have excellent teamwork skills and communication skills as evidenced by my success in group work on my course, especially during our research project and key skills module and my part-time job in a customer facing role for a retail company, in particular whilst helping new staff as part of their induction into the company.

I am particularly impressed by Eden's dedication to using state of the art facilities and collaborative research with world-renowned universities and would relish the opportunity to be part of such a successful team.

Yours sincerely

Tony Thomas

Tony Thomas

Example covering letter: 3

<insert your address and postcode>

Ms A Employer
Graduate Recruitment Manager
ABC Enterprises
Allerton Business Park
Liverpool
L31 1AB

<insert date>

Dear Ms Employer

Re: Graduate Marketing Trainee – ref: GMT/11

I am a final year student in Combined Arts (History and Communication Studies) with a strong interest in marketing so I am keen to apply for the Graduate Marketing Trainee position as advertised on the University of Liverpool Careers & Employability website and I attach my CV for your consideration.

I first became interested in marketing during my first year at university when as a committee member of the hall of residence I took on the responsibility to attract more students to the social events taking place during the year. Since then I have taken several opportunities to enhance my marketing awareness, including participating in a business game where I took the role of the marketing director of a toy manufacturing company and attending a careers presentation by the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

The Communication Studies part of my degree included an optional module in Media and New Technologies and my dissertation is on the Influence of Advertising on Consumer Behaviour, both of which I chose to strengthen my knowledge of marketing.

The skills I have developed through my degree demonstrate my ability to make an effective contribution to a marketing role. Both of these subjects require me to analyse a wide range of texts and information before putting recommendations forward in a presentation to my peers. Studying two subjects has meant that I need to be very well organised and manage my time effectively. I have always achieved the deadlines that have been set for me through careful planning whilst also being aware of the need to be adaptable if required.

Throughout my time at university I have been employed as a sales assistant at Smiths DIY where I have gained an insight into how the company markets products through for example Point of Sale promotions and product positioning in store.

I am particularly attracted to working at ABC Enterprises having spoken to two new graduate trainees at the Liverpool Graduate Careers Fair where I was impressed by their enthusiasm for their roles and their positive approach to working for the company. I am also very keen to gain a professional qualification so the fact that you offer the opportunity to study for the CIM qualification, is very appealing to me. Having read in the Liverpool Echo that ABC Enterprises is about to expand into new markets demonstrates that this would be an exciting time to join the company.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available for interview at any time and look forward to the opportunity to discuss my application further.

Yours sincerely

Anna Green

Anna Green

Example covering letter: 4

<insert your address and postcode>

Mr. A. Baker
Graduate Recruitment Manager
Unigamble
Bold Street
London
WC1A 1AZ

<insert date>

Dear Mr Baker

Re: Graduate Human Resources Trainee Ref: GR11/HR

I was very interested to read your advertisement for the above role advertised on the Careers & Employability Service website as I am very keen to gain an entry level role in Human Resource Management. My specific interest in Unigamble started when I attended a presentation in my department by a University of Liverpool graduate who is on the Unigamble graduate scheme and his enthusiasm for his role and the training he is receiving was very appealing to me.

As part of my French and Spanish degree I had to spend a year abroad and as I knew that I wanted a career in HR I opted for the Independent Placement route where I had to find my own placement in both France and Spain. My first role was in a Bilingual Recruitment Agency in Paris where I assisted with the recruitment process, conducting telephone interviews in French and English and selecting potential candidates. This gave me an insight into recruitment law as well as testing my skills in a fast moving, pressurised environment.

My second placement was in Barcelona for a lettings agency where I grew to be very proficient in customer service skills and advanced IT skills, particularly Excel. The company was almost completely staffed by interns, so I was given lots of responsibilities from day one. I had to use my own initiative frequently and organise my own workload. For both of these placements I had to write a business report as part of my year abroad assignments so it was important that I found out what was critical to the success of the businesses and analysed both the employers and the sectors they operated in.

Having attended an 'Insight into... Careers in HR' session at university in my second year I realised that I needed to develop my influencing and negotiation skills so I volunteered to be a student representative on my department's Staff-Student Liaison Committee. The committee met three times a year and I had to work with staff and students to look at issues and concerns and then negotiate solutions.

I am aware that I need to be fully mobile both within the UK and globally and I am very willing to relocate as necessary. Indeed my language skills and cultural awareness gained through my year abroad will enable me to fully exploit the opportunities for career development that are offered to me.

Thank you for considering my attached CV and I look forward to being able to discuss this with you further.

Yours sincerely

Zahra Ahmed

Zahra Ahmed

Example covering letter: 5

<insert your address and postcode>

Mr B. Gates
IT Services Ltd
Striding Edge Lane
London
WC1E 1AC

<insert date>

Dear Mr Gates

IT Development Trainee (Reference ITGP 2)

Your advertisement for the above vacancy, which was on the University of Liverpool Careers & Employability Service website, is exactly the opportunity I am seeking, and is a role where I feel that I can make a significant contribution.

You will see from my enclosed CV that your requirements match my skills and experience. In particular I have:

- Achieved 300 UCAS points at A level (excluding General Studies). I am also currently on track to obtain a good honours degree in Computer Science.
- Gained an in depth knowledge of structured methods and data modelling and I have a good understanding of Oracle and SQL Server as well as operating systems, networks and programming.
- Demonstrated my excellent communication skills, having been awarded a first class mark for my 2nd year tutorial presentation at university.
- Proved my team skills in numerous situations, for example, as a member of the production line team at Pork Farms I suggested a rota system, which enabled members to change around positions to utilise their particular strengths. This enabled us to meet the Christmas target two days ahead of schedule.
- Identified what was critical to the success of the business in all the organisations I have worked. At the local General Store I successfully managed the implementation of a new stock system by training the shop assistants to use the new bar-code scanner tills, without disrupting the service to customers.

Having spoken to your representative at the Liverpool Graduate Careers Fair I was impressed by the way that early responsibility is given to new graduates and that support is given to undertake further training. As IT Services is a highly diversified global business I believe that I will be able to exploit the exciting opportunities for career development that are offered to me and that my contribution will be valued.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss my application further and would be happy to provide you with any further information needed to support my application.

Yours sincerely

Lawrence Stewart

Lawrence Stewart

Example covering letter: 6 (speculative)

<insert your address and postcode>

Ms M Bowman
Political Editor
Liverpool Evening Express
1 Main Street
Liverpool
L1 1AA

<insert date>

Dear Ms Bowman

Work Placement Summer 2015

As a second year undergraduate student of Politics and Communication Studies at the University of Liverpool, I am looking to gain an insight into journalism through work experience on a local newspaper.

I am aware that you will have many similar requests but, as evidenced by my enclosed CV, I feel that I have the necessary skills and commitment to both contribute to and benefit from the experience of working at your newspaper.

Through my time at university I have made several contributions to the student online newspaper, specialising in features relating to student health issues. This publication is read by 500 students every month.

During my A levels I contributed to the college newspaper 'Viewpoint', which reinforced my interests in becoming a journalist. My role began by writing articles about college events and led to me being the editor for this section. In this role I was able to demonstrate my communication skills, managing my time effectively whilst also motivating my team of writers to meet their deadlines.

As a regular reader of the 'Liverpool Evening Express' I particularly admire the way the paper aims to serve the local community and its recent award for local politics reporting demonstrates the quality of journalism on the paper. I keep up to date with current affairs nationally and for my degree I have elected to take options in British Politics, Aspects of Media Power and New Media and International Crisis. This has developed and broadened my political awareness.

Through my studies I have become a competent user of a range of IT packages including Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. I also use the Internet extensively in order to research for my subjects.

If you were unable to offer me a formal work placement I would really value the opportunity to work shadow one of your journalists at a time convenient to you.

Thank you for considering my application. Should you wish to see evidence of my published work I can send you my portfolio. I will contact you in two weeks from the date of this letter in order to discuss my request further.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Brown

Christopher Brown

Example covering letter: 7

26 Portland Street
Everton
L15 3TY

8th January 2015

Mr Richard Sparks
XYZ Electronics
Cardiff CF 21 2TY

Dear Mr Sparks

Re: Job reference number 240v

I am writing in response to your advertisement in this week's 'Electric news' for a graduate trainee to join your company in September 2015.

I am currently studying for a BEng in Electrical Engineering and Electronics at the University of Liverpool. I expect to graduate this summer with a high 2:1 degree. Having enjoyed my degree enormously, I feel that the completion of my degree will be my most significant achievement to date.

I am very interested in joining your company as a graduate trainee. I admire your company's stance on sustainability and having looked at the company website, I would find it tremendously exciting to be involved in the projects you have planned in Europe and USA.

I am particularly keen to start my career as an engineer. In project work that I've been involved with at university, I feel that I have particular strengths in project management and being able to motivate fellow team members to work to their strengths. Along with my technical and engineering knowledge I think that this would make me a strong candidate for the trainee position.

I have taken several elective modules that would enable me to make an early and positive contribution to your company; in addition my final year project on 'a hexapod walking robot' has enabled me to gain an in-depth knowledge of manufacturing technology.

As part of my involvement with the IET, I have been able to meet engineering professionals in the electronics industry, which has helped to confirm my own enthusiasm for this opportunity with your company.

I am available for interview at any time and would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application with you.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Edison

Thomas Edison